

Researching Library Law Online

By Lance M. Werner

Recently, I was at my desk contemplating the subject for this article. Although there are a number of legal issues that may be of interest to Michigan's public libraries and worthy of discussion, I felt that discussing free electronic sources of library law might be more useful. I am basing this decision on the venerable adage, "Give a person a fish, feed them for a day. Teach a person to fish, feed them for a lifetime." This article focuses on electronic resources for: the state constitution, Michigan Compiled Laws, Executive Orders, Michigan Attorney General Opinions, state rules, state tax information, federal tax information, municipal codes, federal code provisions, and the United States Constitution.

Michigan

Fortunately, there are a number of superb Michigan legal resources that are freely available *via* the web. A veritable cornucopia of Michigan law is offered online through the Michigan Legislature's website at <http://www.michiganlegislature.org>. Offerings at this website include: Michigan Compiled Laws, the Constitution of 1963, pending legislation, executive orders, committee resolutions, and historical documents such as the Magna Carta and the Michigan Constitution of 1835. Numerous search options are available, including queries based on citation or keyword. Additionally, it should be noted that Governor Jennifer M. Granholm's Executive Orders are available through the Office of the Governor's website at <http://www.michigan.gov/gov/0,1607,7-168-21975---,00.html>.

The Office of the Attorney General's website at <http://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,1607,7-164-20988---,00.html> is an invaluable resource for anyone seeking official opinions of the Michigan Attorney General. This resource covers current official Attorney General opinions through opinions from January 1, 1963. Searches can be conducted a variety of ways, including by opinion numbers or keywords.

The Michigan Register and Michigan Administrative Code can be accessed through the State Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules Division of the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth website at http://www.michigan.gov/cis/0,1607,7-154-10576_35738---,00.html. State tax information is available electronically through the Michigan Department of Treasury's website at <http://www.michigan.gov/treasury>. The Department of Treasury's website has a multitude of offerings, including information regarding nonprofit organizations, sales and use tax, property tax, and State Tax Commission Bulletins.

Michigan's municipal codes and ordinances are online as well. The Municipal Code Corporation's Online Library is a fantastic free resource for researching Michigan's municipal codes and is available at http://www.municode.com/resources/online_codes.asp. Finally, the Library of Michigan, Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries offers informational library law resources, such as the *Library Laws Handbook*, 2004-2005 Ed. These resources can be accessed through the Department's website at <http://www.michigan.gov/hal>.

Federal

As with Michigan legal information, a wealth of federal legal information can be found online. Electronic offerings afford researchers access to several federal resources, including but not limited to: the United States Code (USC), federal tax code, as well as Constitutional provisions.

There are several avenues to find the USC on the web. One option is offered by the Legal Information Institute's (LII) website at <http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/>. The LII website has a number of search options available for researchers. The USC can also be viewed at the Government Printing Office (GPO) website at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/uscode/index.html>. In addition, GPO also furnishes access to the United States Constitution at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/constitution/index.html>.

The Internal Revenue Code is available on John Walker's Fourmilab website at <http://www.fourmilab.ch/ustax/ustax.html>, and can also be obtained through GPO's website at <http://www.access.gpo.gov/uscode/title26/title26.html>. Another extremely useful information tool for research concerning procuring library tax certification letters and 501(c)(3) status is available through the Internal Revenue Service's website at <http://www.irs.gov/govt/fslg/article/0,,id=112708,00.html> and <http://www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/index.html>, respectively.

Conclusion

The resources mentioned in this article represent a fraction of what is available online. The electronic resources mentioned above are the resources that I commonly use when addressing various legal issues from the library community. It is of the utmost importance that these resources are used for informational purposes only and not as a substitute for the services of a licensed attorney. If you have any questions or comments please contact Lance M. Werner, Library Law Specialist for the Library of Michigan at (517) 373-1299.